

TALKING PAPER

Prepared By: William G. Terry, Mayor, Town of Pittsboro, North Carolina

Date: February 16, 2014

Subject: North Carolina General Assembly/Environmental Review Commission
Public Hearing; RE: Restrictions on Local Ordinances

On February 10, 2014, the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Pittsboro unanimously approved a resolution in opposition to state imposed restrictions on local municipal environmental ordinances that require a higher level of environmental protections than those provided in state and Federal laws and regulations.

We understand that environmental issues can and do vary significantly in our state, from the western mountains to the piedmont, the sand hills and the coastal beach communities. This environmental diversity makes it very difficult to arrive at a standard set of one-size-fits-all environmental laws and regulations that give the appropriate weight or emphasis to environmental issues state-wide.

We understand that much environmental law is based largely upon science and technology; however, we think that there is also an important local cultural aspect to environmental issues that depends upon how local communities use environmental resources including, agriculture, forestry, commercial fishing, tourism, recreation and protection of water resources. We believe that local communities should be afforded the opportunity to exceed the minimum standards when they are particularly reliant upon environmental resources to sustain the local economy.

In the case of the Town of Pittsboro, we believe that our location in the Jordan Lake watershed and in close proximity to a lake that supplies drinking water to much of the Research Triangle, we have a special responsibility to be good stewards of that very important natural resource. Accordingly, we have adopted the Jordan Lake Rules for New Development ahead of the required schedule. We would like to preserve our ability to reasonably exceed the minimum standards for storm water regulations and other environmental laws that affect water quality in Jordan Lake.

We are not asking for unlimited authority in this regard and would expect that the state's laws would include a process for review and approval of local ordinances that exceed the minimum state and Federal standards. We would also support an appeals process for property owners who feel that local regulations are unreasonably restrictive.